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FROM THE

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

United States
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Science and
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December 26, 1978

One of my most interesting assignments since my last letter was a visit to the People's Republic of China (October 31-November 15). The official U.S. agricultural delegation was headed by Secretary Bob Bergland and included Assistant Secretary M. Rupert Cutler.

Two SEA colleagues also made the trip: Dr. Roger Gerrits, swine production staff scientist, and Dr. Quentin Jones, plant introduction staff scientist.

One important outcome of the visit is an agreement to exchange study groups in the animal and plant sciences in 1979. The Chinese are greatly interested in learning about our research and education programs in plant germplasm and pest management, and about the latest developments in our swine and poultry disease research.

Among the many things that impressed us during the visit was the high level of production that the Chinese obtain from their labor-intensive system of agriculture. A population at least four times as large as ours gets its food from only one-third the amount of land we cultivate. Everyone we encountered appeared well-clothed and well-fed.

Also impressive was the trade fair at Canton, well attended by foreign buyers and offering products ranging from heavy industrial goods to those of arts and crafts, and including many items of sophisticated electronic equipment.

In Szechwan Province, we saw an amazing irrigation and flood control system -- built 2200 years ago and still operating today.

Just before leaving for China I attended the 70th Annual meeting of the American Phytopathological Society, held in Tuscon, Ariz. The theme of the meeting this year was "Plant Production under Stress." I was honored to present the keynote address and to share with those attending some thoughts on the challenges ahead in research, extension and teaching, given the "stresses" we face. I'd be happy to send a copy of my remarks to anyone who might be interested in them. Just let me know.

In November, I visited SEA's Plum Island Animal Disease Center, Long Island, N.Y., where I enjoyed meeting and talking with SEA employees and also attending the 9th Annual Conference of Laboratory Engineers.

The first part of this month I was in Chicago, for the annual meeting of the American Agronomy Society, and to chair the Society's Agronomic Administrators Roundtable. For those of us concerned about attracting young people to the agricultural sciences, the agronomy meetings were most encouraging. One out of four attending the meetings was a student -- a record number, and a high percentage of women in the group.

Named as Fellows of both the American Society of Agronomy and the Soil Science Society of America were SEA scientists: Harold L. Barrows, soil scientist at Beltsville, Md.; Craig L. Wiegand, soil scientist at Weslaco, Tex.; and Joe T. Ritchie, soil scientist of Temple, Tex.

Russell J. Kohel, SEA cotton geneticist at College Station, Tex., was made a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Science Society of America.

William "Bill" Larson, SEA soil scientist at St. Paul, Minn., was elected president-elect of the Soil Science Society of America for 1978-79.

The major concerns I pick up in my visits around the country have to do with budget (including travel), ceilings and staffing. I share these concerns. As far as the budget goes, about all we can do for the present is "do better with less." That is what President Carter's budget is demanding from most of us in government.

However, I should like you to know that I have presented our case for funds to carry out our important missions as forcefully as I can and at the highest appropriate levels. With regard to staffing, personnel slots will be assigned to program wherever it is possible for me to do so.

Other concerns I have heard have to do with a sort of "sense of isolation". . .of not knowing the people who are deciding things in Washington. . .of lines of communication that are in need of repair. . .of new lines that need to be opened.

It is obviously not possible for me to visit every field location and to meet with all of you. However, I am giving a good deal of thought to ways of making our lines of communication more effective. I welcome hearing your views, having your advice. I cannot promise that I will act on all suggestions, but I can promise that I will consider them. I cannot guarantee that I will be able to reply to every letter, but I can guarantee that I will read and value each one.

The National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board held its first meeting in Washington, D.C., December 6-8.

Mr. Ralph S. Abascal, General Counsel of California Rural Legal Assistance, Sacramento, was elected the Board's Chairman by the membership. Ms. Janet B. Schwartz, Health Program Specialist, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Boston, was elected Vice Chairman.

The Board also named two of its members to serve on the Joint Council. They are Roberta Jane Archer, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Springfield; and William H. Anthony, Sr., Alice Sidney Farms, Lake Village, Ark. They will represent producers and the general public on the Joint Council.

Mrs. Archer is a marketing specialist in the Division of Markets and is also a full partner in a 900-acre corn-soybean farm in Sangamon County, Ill. Mr. Anthony is manager and partner of Alice Sidney Farms, which includes 410 acres devoted to raising catfish, 900 acres of rice, 3,000 acres of soybeans, and a rice drying and seed plant.

The Board meets again January 8-9, and in March will present its first report to the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Joint Council on the Food and Agricultural Sciences will be meeting January 10-12 in Washington, D.C. The Executive Committee of the Council met in St. Louis during the convention of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) to discuss budget preparation procedures; and in December in Washington, D.C., to hear subcommittee reports, to review criteria for competitive grants and incorporate suggestions, and to receive an update from Ms. Audrey Cross, USDA's Coordinator for Nutrition Policy, on long-range plans for human nutrition research and education.

I was sorry that my trip to China prevented my attending the NASULGC convention in St. Louis. However, I was ably represented by SEA Associate Director Dr. Ralph J. McCracken.

Ralph addressed a joint session on my behalf. He tells me many of those there seemed pleased by, and expressed confidence in, the working relations that are evolving between SEA and its state partners.

Ralph also spoke to colleagues in Extension's Epsilon Sigma Phi fraternity. He stressed the key role that federal extension has to play in SEA. We need a strong partnership if we are to be of maximum service to the people served by Extension.

Meeting with ECOP. The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) met December 12-13 in Washington, D.C. with key SEA and USDA officials, including Secretary Bergland; Assistant Secretary Carol T. Foreman; Deputy Assistant Secretary David C. Unger;

Dr. Howard W. Hjort, Director of Economics, Policy Analysis, and Budget;
Dr. Neill Schaller, Deputy Director for Extension.

The meeting afforded ECOP an opportunity to discuss SEA and departmental priorities and other areas of common concern and effort. Two key items discussed were the federal role in Extension and the need for better documentation of Extension program accomplishments.

I am continuing my monthly meetings with the four Directors-at-Large for the State Agricultural Experiment Stations. It is a valuable interchange. I am grateful to the Directors for taking the time to meet with me.

The Animal Health Advisory Board met October 25-26. Among its recommendations: USDA establish four research priority areas in animal health and disease research--respiratory, enteric, reproductive, and parasitic; USDA establish a more comprehensive and timely data-reporting system for losses due to animal diseases; lists of animal diseases by species be developed in priority order for research.

Grant news. SEA Guidelines for Special Grants were published in the December 13 Federal Register. Preproposals are due January 26, 1979. For further information contact Dr. Edward C. Miller, Acting Assistant Deputy Director, Cooperative Research, (202) 447-6050.

Guidelines for Competitive Grants were published in the December 18 issue of the Federal Register. Advance mailings were made to all of last year's applicants.

Funding for the Competitive Grants is the same as last year: \$15 million, with \$5 million for human nutrition research, and \$10 million for plant science research.

There are two proposal deadlines: Proposals for "Social-Behavioral Factors Affecting Food Preferences and Buying Habits," "Biological Stress on Plants," and "Biological Nutrition Fixation" must be postmarked by January 19, 1979. Proposals for "Genetic Mechanisms for Crop Improvement," "Human Requirements for Nutrients," and "Photosynthesis" by February 23, 1979.

For further information contact Dr. Joe Key, Head of the SEA Competitive Research Grants Office, (703) 235-2630.

Budget developments. Details on the FY 1980 budget will be known when the President presents his budget to the Congress on January 22. Meanwhile, work on the FY 1981 budget has begun. Here is the tentative skeleton schedule for FY 81 budget development:

December 1978 to February 1979: Areas of emphasis for indepth analysis identified. Areas of emphasis for increased funding selected. Missions, Goals, and Objectives specified. (This is the time for ideas to be injected into the budget process through regular SEA Unit channels and from cooperators.)

April 1979: Base program reviews completed by SEA units. Indepth analysis of areas of emphasis completed.

Spring Preview: USDA's Program and Budget Reivew Board reviews policies with Office of Management and Budget, and Agencies receive preliminary guidance.

May 1979: Development of increase-level Decision Packages completed.

June 1979: SEA managers approve and rank Decision Packages.

July 1979: SEA submits Budget to the Secretary.

September 1979: USDA submits Budget to OMB.

January 1980: President submits Budget to Congress.

October 1980: Implementation of FY 1981 Budget.

We anticipate continuing dialog with our cooperators throughout this budget process.

Dr. Kyle Jane Coulter has joined our staff to conduct a manpower assessment study in food and agriculture. She is on a 14-month assignment to SEA from her duties as Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in Home Economics at Texas Tech University. Dr. Coulter is working with Dr. Homer Folks, SEA Assistant Director for Higher Education.

Dr. John M. (Mike) Brazzel has been named Chief of SEA's Evaluation and Impact Staff. Dr. Brazzel comes to us from the Department of Energy, where he headed an analysis group. He received his Ph.D from Tulane University.

SEA's Human Nutrition Center officially came into existence December 14, 1978. It consists of the Nutrition Institute (except for the animal nutrition laboratories) at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Md.; the Human Nutrition Research Center at Tufts in Boston, Mass. (targeted for completion in 1981); the Human Nutrition Laboratory in Grand Forks, N.Dak.; the Children's Nutrition Laboratory, Houston, Tex. (now in the planning stages as a part of the National Children's Nutritional Center at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital); and the Consumer and Food Economics Institute (except for the Family Economics Research Group), Hyattsville, Md. Dr. Mark Hegsted, Administrator of the Center, with Dr. Jack Iacono,

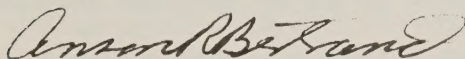
Acting Associate Administrator, also has the responsibility for coordinating the nutrition programs within the department, as well as with other federal agencies.

Dr. George Browning, Director-at-Large, North Central Region, State Agricultural Experiment Stations, will be retiring on December 31. Dr. Browning will be sorely missed. We thank him for the valuable contributions to agriculture he has made over these many years. Dr. Arlon Hazen, Dean of Agriculture and Director of Experiment Station, North Dakota, will assume Dr. Browning's role as Director-at-Large on January 1, 1979.

Equal Employment Opportunity. 1. One of my prime objectives as Director of SEA is improvement in the management and implementation of the Agency's EEO policy and plans. To hasten the achievement of this objective, and in keeping with the intent of the law and my own convictions about equal opportunity, I am asking that all supervisors determine whether any regulations, guidelines, program/personnel policy, or procedures are resulting in unequal treatment of women and minorities. 2. I am talking not only about employment and advancement for employees but also the delivery of services for which the Agency is responsible. 3. The Equal Opportunity Staff of my office will serve as the focal point on all EEO matters in SEA. I have asked this staff working in concert with the SEA Personnel, to insure that recruitment activities are designed to reach, attract, and employ women and minorities for professional positions. 4. Moreover, assure that women and minority groups receive appropriate consideration for employment, scholarship, training, and skills utilizations. 5. We must use every authority available to accomplish this objective. 6. We are going to move forward vigorously to provide equality of opportunity for all of our employees to seek and achieve their highest potential and productivity.

Season's Greetings. Let me take this occasion to extend season's greetings to all SEA employees and our colleagues and partners both within and without USDA. I especially wish to thank all those who helped get SEA organized and off to a good start. I wish you all the very best in the New Year, and I look forward to working with you to realize our personal and organizational goals.

Sincerely,



ANSON R. BERTRAND
Director
Science and Education

